

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 AID-05 PC-01
TRSY-02 /090 W
-----009766 040337Z /61

R 031726Z MAY N78
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7920
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USINCSO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SAN SALVADOR 2137

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, PINS, PINT, SHUM, ES
SUBJECT: MAY 1 EVENTS IN SAN SALVADOR

REF: SAN SALVADOR 2048

1. DESPITE RECENT FLAREUPS AND CONFRONTATIONS, THE MAY 1 PARADE AND MEETING IN SAN SALVADOR ORIGINALLY SPONSORED BY THE CONFEDERATION OF SALVADORAN WORKERS (CUTS) (SEE REFTTEL) CAME OFF PEACEFULLY AND WITH NO SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS REPORTED. AN AD APPEARED IN THE APRIL 28 "LA PRENSA GRAFICA" INDICATING THAT THE "CENTRAL DE TRABAJADORES SALVADORENOS" (CTS), A LABOR GROUP WITH TIES TO THE OPPOSITION CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDC), AND THE "SINDICATO TEXTIL INDUSTRIAS UNIDAS, S.A." (STIUSA), AN INDEPENDENT TEXTILE WORKERS' UNION, HAD JOINED CUTS IN SPONSORING THE MAY 1 EVENTS. POSTERS CARRIED BY SOME WORKERS DURING MARCH INDICATED THAT THERE WAS ALSO SOME PARTICIPATION BY A NON-UNION GROUP CALLING ITSELF THE "FEBRUARY 28 POPULAR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LEAGUES".

2. CUTS, MADE UP OF THE COMMUNIST-DOMINATED LABOR FEDERATIONS, FUSS AND FESTIAVTSCEs, AND THE LEFTIST BUT STILL REPORTEDLY NON-COMMUNIST LABOR FEDERATION FENASTRAS, REPRESENTS APPROXIMATELY 26,000 WORKERS AFFILIATED WITH 54 UNIONS WITHIN THE

THREE LABOR FEDERATIONS. THE CTS CLAIMS TO HAVE 500-600 MEMBERS AND STIUSA AROUND 1,300. THESE THREE GROUPS THUS REPRESENT APPROXIMATELY 28,000 OUT OF THE 76,000 SALVADORAN WORKERS WHO ARE UNIONIZED. DURING THE MARCH AND MEETING ITSELF, MEDIA AND OTHER REPORTS INDICATE THAT ANYWHERE FROM "SEVERAL HUNDRED" TO 3,000 WORKERS PARTICIPATED. PRESIDENT ROMERO HAS PRIVATELY ESTIMATED THE NUMBER AT 1,800. (MOST ACCURATE FIGURE PROBABLY ABOUT 1,000.)

3. MARCHERS REPORTEDLY CARRIED PLACARDS ASKING FOR HIGHER SALARIES, AND "END TO REPRESSION", AND THE ABOLITION OF THE LAW OF THE DEFENSE AND GUARANTEE OF PUBLIC ORDER. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, SPEAKERS AT THE MEETING HELD IN THE PLAZA LIBERTAD CALLED FOR THE FREEING OF "POLITICAL PRISONERS", THE FREE EXERCISE OF UNION ORGANIZING EFFORTS IN BOTH THE CITY AND COUNTRY, AND MADE REFERENCE TO THE PAST EFFORTS OF U.S. WORKERS TO OBTAIN THE EIGHT-HOUR WORKDAY. BOTH MARCH (WHICH BEGAN AT 9:30 A.M.) AND MEETING WERE OVER BEFORE NOON AND PARTICIPANTS PEACEFULLY DISPERSED, PRESUMABLY TO ENJOY REMAINDER OF HOLIDAY.

4. THE "ILLEGAL" MEETING CALLED BY THE LEFTIST UNITED POPULAR ACTION FRONT (FAPU) WAS ALSO HELD AS SCHEDULED IN FRONT OF EL CALVARIO CHURCH AT 10:00 A.M. MAY 1. THIS MEETING WENT VIRTUALLY UNNOTICED BY LOCAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC IN GENERAL. SCANTY REPORTING INDICATES THAT THERE WAS GROUP OF NO MORE THAN 100 DEMONSTRATORS WHO LISTENED TO TWO UNNAMED SPEAKERS CRITICIZE GOES AND POLICY OF U.S. SUPPORT FOR REPRESSIVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REGIME. AFTERNOON RADIO AND TV ANNOUNCED THAT SHOOTING HAD OCCURRED AT THIS MEETING INVOLVING OUT-OF-UNIFORM MUNICIPAL POLICE. SUBSEQUENT REPORTS STATED SEVERAL SHORTS FIRED IN AIR AND CROWD IMMEDIATELY DISPERSED. NO CASUALTIES OR CONFRONTATIONS REPORTED.

5. POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY BLOC (BPR), WHICH HAS BEEN MOST ACTIVE ANTI-GOES FORCE IN RECENT WEEKS, HELD NO MEETING IN SAN SALVADOR ALTHOUGH SOME OF ITS MEMBERS PROBABLY PARTICIPATED IN CUTS MARCH AND MEETING.

6. COMMENT. THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE MAY 1 EVENTS IN EL SALVAOR WAS FAR BELOW THE ORIGINAL ESTIMATES MADE BY NATIONAL POLICE AND PREVIOUS MAY 1 TURNOUTS. PRESIDENT ROMERO'S DECISION TO CONFINE UNIFORMED POLICE AND SECURITY FORCES TO BARRACKS ON AN ALERT STATUS PROBABLY HAD MUCH TO DO WITH THE LACK OF ANY INCIDENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE IN SAN SALVADOR ON MAY 1. THE LACK OF SUCH INCIDENTS AND THE ORIGINAL GOES DECISION TO GRANT OFFICIAL PERMISSION FOR THE CUTS-SPONSORED MARCH AND MEETING (CONSIDERED BY MANY TO BE A POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS MOVE)

AMY WELL EASE SOME OF THE RECENT TENSIONS AND ENCOURAGE BOTH
OPPOSITION FORCES AND THE GOES THAT NON-VIOLENT
EXPRESSIONS OF ANTI-GOES SENTIMENT BOTH POSSIBLE AND
PRACTICAL. IN COMMENTING ON THE DAY'S EVENTS TO VISITING
ASSISTANT AID ADMINISTRATOR VALDEZ, PRESIDENT ROMERO SAID
THAT THIS HAD BEEN THE MOST PEACEFUL MAY DAY IN RECENT
YEARS.
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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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